

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9492

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 3406

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 23 AND 24, THE 54TH AND 55TH DAYS OF THE
OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 3296

1. SUMMARY. FANK EVACUATED AN ISLAND NEAR BANAM ON THE MEKONG AND KC ATTACKS AGAINST THE LOWER MEKONG GARRISON AT PREK DACH SHARPLY INCREASED. MAUNG RUSSEI'S FEW DEFENDERS SNEAKED OUT OF TOWN UNDER HEAVY KC PRESSURE, LEAVING THAT AGRICULTURAL CENTER AND A STRETCH OF ROUTE 5 IN KC HANDS. A KC AMBUSH ON ROUTE 4 CLAIMED THE LIFE OF BRIGADIER GENERAL HEM PAO, KOMPONG SPEU TRAINING CENTER COMMANDER AND KC ATTACKS AGAINST THE FORMER ROYAL CAPITAL AT OUDONG RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF THE OUDONG MEANCHEY PROVINCE GOVERNOR, COLONEL HANG YIEU. THIRTY-FIVE ROCKETS HIT AT POCHENTONG OVER THE TWO DAYS, AT LEAST A DOZEN EXPLODED ON THE AIRPORT. AT LEAST 10 PEOPLE WERE INJURED. THREE ROUNDS LANDED IN PHNOM PENH'S NORTHERN AREA, KILLING ONE AND WOUNDING 6. END SUMMARY.

2. THE KC PUSHED FANK OFF KOH CHAMROEUN, THE ISLAND NEAR
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BANAM ON THE MEKONG XEB. 23. THE BATTALION AT PREK DACH,

ON THE WEST BANK OF THE MEKONG SOUTH OF NEAK LUONG, REPORTED ATTACKS ALL DAY AND NIGHT FEB. 23 AND QUALIFIED THEIR SITUATION AS "SERIOUS". A NAVAL CONVOY BRINGING AMMUNITION FROM PHNOM PENH ARRIVED AT NEAK LUONG UNSCATHED FEB. 24.

3. FANK DEFENDERS CREPT OUT OF MAUNG RUSSEI IN THE EARLY MORNING OF FEB. 23 AFTER THEY HAD USED MOST OF THEIR AMMUNITION REPELLING DETERMINED KC ATTACKS. FORTY-FIVE SOLDIERS, BELIEVED TO BE MOST OF THE REMAINING DEFENDERS AND AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF CIVILIANS MADE IT TO THE ASSEMBLY POINT OUTSIDE THE TOWN. THE KC ARE NOW IN TOTAL CONTROL OF THIS KEY AGRICULTURAL CENTER THAT STRADDLES ROUTE 5 BETWEEN BATTAMBANG AND PURSAT. FINAL CASUALTY FIGURES ON THE TRAIN MINED AND AMBUSHED BETWEEN BATTAMBANG AND THE THAI BORDER FEB. 20 SHOW 30 KILLED, OF WHOM FIVE MILITARY, 40 WOUNDED AND 100 PASSENGERS MISSING AND PRESUMED FLED INTO NEARBY WOODS.

4. ACTIVITY INCREASED IN THE 3RD DIVISION AREA SOUTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH AS THE KC ENCIRCLED SEVERAL POSITIONS OF THE 15TH BRIGADE. ON THE 24TH, ONE PARATROOP BATTALION AND TWO OTHER BATTALIONS PLUS AN ARMORED PERSONNEL SQUADRON REINFORCED THE THIRD DIVISION.

5. AN AMBUSH JUST EAST OF KOMPONG SPEU MORTALLY WOUNDED BRIGADIER GENERAL HEM PAO, COMMANDER OF THE TRAINING CENTER AT THAT TOWN. HE WAS THE THIRD FANK GENERAL OFFICER TO DIE FROM HOSTILE FIRE (TWO TAKEO GOVERNORS DIED IN 1971 AND 1972 RESPECTIVELY). HEAVY FIGHTING AT OUDONG, THE FORMER ROYAL CAPITAL NORTH OF PHNOM PENH ON ROUTE 5, COST THE LIFE OF COLONEL HANG YIEU, GOVERNOR OF OUDONG MEANCHEY MINI-PROVINCE.

6. THIRTY-FIVE ROCKETS HIT AT POCHENTONG OVER THE TWO-DAY PERIOD INJURING 10 PEOPLE. AT LEAST A DOZEN OF THE ROUNDS EXPLODED ON THE BASE. THE CAPITAL TOOK THREE ROUNDS IN ITS NORTHERN RESIDENTIAL AREA WITH ONE PERSON KILLED AND SIX WOUNDED.
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